



Statement

Statement by Commander 3rd Canadian Division on the Findings of the Board of Inquiry into the Death of Corporal Nolan Caribou

December 17, 2018 – Edmonton – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces

“Corporal Nolan Caribou, a member of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles (R Wpg Rif), was found deceased on 18 November 2017 in the Range Training Area at Canadian Forces Base Shilo, MB during a unit-mandated field training exercise.

“After learning about a number of very troubling allegations, I asked for the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service (CFNIS) to investigate and I ordered the conduct of a Board of Inquiry (BOI), which completed its work at the end of May 2018. Sadly, the BOI found that Cpl Caribou took his own life while on duty. Although we do not know everything going on in Cpl Caribou’s life, I believe that the harassment he faced and the failure of unit leaders to intervene contributed to his death. Moreover, we found through the BOI deep administrative deficiencies and troubling recurring activities in the Minto Armoury to include bullying, unsanctioned fighting, inappropriate use of alcohol resulting in violence and initiation activities.

“In the six months since this report was submitted, all levels of command have worked tirelessly to implement a number of changes aimed at immediately halting inappropriate behaviour and to start the long-term journey towards mindset change. Amongst a vast number of initiatives, I have ordered remedial action against five members, which includes the removal of one individual from a senior command position he was previously selected for and the relief of another leader from the performance of military duties. We have introduced empowered and full-time leaders to specific units in order to address systemic challenges. A CFNIS investigation is ongoing and could result in additional disciplinary and administrative action.

“I have met with and personally committed to Corporal Caribou’s family that his death will not be in vain, and that we must work to be better for this painful experience. In order to unlock these opportunities for the family and affected soldiers to heal and grow, it is essential that we first accept responsibility for our role in the death of this soldier.

“Our Chief of the Defence Staff has made clear what he expects in terms of the behaviour and professional comportment of all CAF personnel. I am convinced that most troops and leaders ‘get it’ – that they mutually respect one another and that they serve our country with tremendous strength. Throughout the Division, leaders are present, they are sharing in hardships and they are showing moral courage to hit inappropriate behaviour head-on. Words and policies are not enough. Collectively, our leaders must model the behaviour we expect of our soldiers. When we come across members that choose not to respect others, we will act as empowered sentinels and intervene to stop harmful behaviour by mobilizing all administrative and disciplinary tools at our disposal. Nothing less is acceptable as we prepare teams for the crucible of operations, where trust is imperative.

“Finally, we have found amidst the pain of this incident examples of courage, leadership, compassion and professionalism. Many soldiers and leaders have come together to expose this problem, to work through long-term remedies and to provide compassionate support to grieving family and friends.”

Brigadier-General Trevor Cadieu, Commander 3rd Canadian Division/Joint Task Force (West)



Quick Facts

Timeline

- The first CFNIS investigation determined there was no foul play involved in the sudden death of Cpl Caribou.
- A second CFNIS investigation commenced in February 2018 after troubling allegations of harassment at the Minto Armoury. This investigation is on-going.
- Simultaneously, a BOI was completed 25 May 2018, and it was subsequently approved by the approving authority on 30 August 2018. The BOI found that: Cpl Caribou took his own life while on duty; that the harassment he faced and the failure of unit leaders to intervene contributed to his death; there were systemic administrative deficiencies and inappropriate behaviour include bullying, unsanctioned fighting, inappropriate use of alcohol resulting in violence and initiation activities

Actions ordered by the chain of command

- Immediate term actions. Following information received from the Medical Professional Technical Suicide Review (MPTSR) of inappropriate behaviour at the Minto Armoury, Comd 3 Cdn Div immediately suspended the existing BOI into the death of Cpl Caribou and ordered a new one expanding the mandate to include investigating recurrent and unusual activities at Minto Armoury. The BOI was completed in May 2018 and was staffed to the VCDS as the approving authority.
- In addition, Comd 3 Cdn Div immediately engaged CFNIS, who initiated a second separate investigation into allegation of inappropriate behaviour at the Minto Armoury, which is home to R Wpg Rif. This second investigation is currently on-going.

Actions taken

- Leadership failures were addressed through remedial action against five members, which includes the removal of one individual from a senior command position and the relief of another leader from the performance of military duties pending the results of the CFNIS investigation. Strong leadership has been established in the individual units, with the appointment of a full time command team and hand-selected Regular Force Cadre;
- We have disaggregated the Winnipeg Infantry Tactical Group in order for units to parade on separate nights and thus develop their own positive identities and esprit-de-corps;
- We have met personally with all Minto-based command teams and soldiers to reinforce the mutual respect that is expected of all 3 Cdn Div soldiers;
- Under the leadership of Comd 38 CBG, all unit command teams have completed harassment training so that they understand CAF Harassment policies and their roles as leaders;



- Several infrastructure upgrades at Minto Armoury have been completed or are ongoing in order to enhance morale and pride of possession of our facilities;
- Minto Armoury messes – where alcohol is served – were ordered closed. I have since reopened them after ensuring proper management and supervision are in place;
- 38 CBG is working with 17 Wing to mobilize more responsive mental health, Military Family Resource Centre and Personal Support Program services. Amongst other healthy recreational activities, a sanctioned and properly supervised unarmed combat training program will be implemented;
- We have mobilized staff assist visits to address long-standing administrative deficiencies;
- Training, operational, and ceremonial events will serve as opportunities to further motivate and galvanize the soldiers of affected units. Unprecedented levels of Army Reserve and Regular Force collaboration and integration are occurring, culminating in the spring of 2019 when Minto-based soldiers will have the opportunity to deploy abroad in service to Canada. Events like the Juno 75th Anniversary and Arctic Response Company Group are also motivating soldiers to higher levels of participation;
- The 3 Cdn Div Readiness, Resilience, Growth program will be integrated into all unit training. All members and leaders will be afforded opportunities to conduct customized Resilience Training (Road to Mental Readiness-based with focus on experiential learning).

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